[For information on the eddĭr (a form of welfare association) and the equb (a savings association) see categories 747 and 454 respectively.]

659 178 spectacle of self-abandon of the mourners, who scream, roll on the ground, cut themselves bloody, etc.; and the financial burden of excessively elaborate memorial feasts which were and sometimes still are ruinous to the families involved. To teach by example--a most effective way in a country where everyone imitates the "great man"" --the emperor himself ordered that no memorial feast be given for his own daughter who died in 1933; just some money donations were made to the priests reciting prayers for her soul.

[874] More recently, the emperor founded the Theological College of Addis Ababa, headed by an Egyptian Coptic president and some faculty members from among Egyptian Copts, to modernize the curriculum of the future leaders of the church among whom he hopes, for the first time, to find allies rather than permanent foes. The probable successor to the present Abuna (archbishop) of Ethiopia, Theophilus, is believed to share the emperor's views and has already travelled abroad several times. The emperor wishes the younger clergy to become more learned and to be able to translate the Bible from Geez into Amharic for the lay populace. He has promoted the printing of bibles in Amharic, rather than Geez, thus using religion to promote the official, national language of the state. [198]

6. The Fraternal Association called "mahabbar".

575 This "voluntary" association of individuals, growing out of the "private communion" of the Abyssinian

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

575 church, fills several voids in Amhara social organization, and establishes links of human relationships which otherwise leave little choice to the individual of any age and sex beyond his assigned roles in the feudal system, church, and family.

Perhaps this is why there are so many facets to the "mäḥabbär" association, and why it is called upon by its members to fulfill so many functions that in many other human societies take separate forms. To a considerable extent the mahabbar maintains an elastic equibrium between the individual and the society. For in this association he can exercise a personal choice; he can cross boundary lines of age and sex, and occasionally even of class; here he has the rare opportunity of new experience in interpersonal relations; here he finds economic as well as emotional security; recognition of his status in a highly respectable association; the response of life-long personal friends.

575 796 The mäḥabbär in Abyssinia may be as old as Coptic Christianity itself in that country. It is based on the "private communion", one of the few instances in which the sacerdotal church concerns itself with the layman, probably because the time and place of mahabbar meeting leave them remote from the ritually sacred precincts of the church buildings. By the same token the mahabbar enables the church to extend a broad control over its lay members.

The religious basis of this private communion rests on the monthly meeting of its members for worship, in the hut of one of them (they take turns as hosts).

575 796 The preferred number of charter members is 12. The reason is not certain, but some ascribe it to the 12 apostles, some so that each member has the duty and privigele of acting as host once a year. The evening itself, within each month, is preferably the host's. The host asks his confessor-priest to officiate furing the religious part of the meeting. Part of the worship always includes ceremonial drinking from a special clay cup called "ṭuwa", or "ṣuwa", which is dedicated to a saint or archangel, and from which the particular mähabbär takes its name (e.g. the "ṭuwa-ef-Gabriel mähabbär). The host has prepared a large "gan" (largest clay jar) of barley beer, which is blessed by the officiating priest. There is also ceremonial breaking of bread, the well-baked kind usually called "dabye", preferably of wheat, and half an inch thick, which, on this occasion, is referred to as "ṭadiq" (lit. offering of righteousness), or as "shellemlämi" (a reference to the cross). This bread is sometimes adorned with incised geometric designs. A poor host may substitute the common limp enjära bread, but that would lower his prestige. A rich host or one trying to gain prestige will have carpets spread on theddirt floor, and even the poorest can spread odoriferous grasses and leaves, to give the hut a clean and festive atmosphere.

[531] [554]

The members congregate at dusk, some a bit earlier because of the Amhara aversion to travel after sundown. When the confessor-priest is seen to approach, the members rise and redrape their shammas in the symbol

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575 of going to church. The priest brings the holy water,
796 sprinkles the inside of the hut, and intones prayers. At the proper moments, the members prostrate themselves before the "ṭuwa" cup containing specially blessed barley beer. The "ṭadiq" bread is placed on the wicker worktable ("mäsob"), and is then divided by the confessor-priest among the members; the leftovers go to the host's wife who had baked it but who remains modestly in the background. Some of this blessed delicacy is given to the poor. The confessor absolves all present from sins, then passes the "tuwa" around so that everyone can drink from it. Then lots are drawn by means of sticks to see who the next host will be for the "ṭuwa" and "ṭadiq". The ceremonial phase is now over.

[554] Roasted barley ("qolo") and peppery stew ("wot") are served in as many varieties and quantities as the host can afford, and many go beyond their means to gain prestige. Drummers and chanters ("azmari") are often hired, and the noisy entertainment is heard in a wide area, attracting many uninvited guests who sit outside the hut and hope to share in some way in the food or entertainment.

575 Women usually have their own mahabbar sodalities, and usually name them in dedication to some event in the life of the Virgin Mary ("Maryam"). But sometimes women attach themselves to a male mahabbar as a kind of auxiliary, sitting on a mat by themselves in a corner, and tolerated because of their services in preparing beer, bread and stew, or even honored if they are heir-

575 esses or belong to prestige families. Women members
608 are considered "sisters" of the fraternity, and men "brothers". This establishes an artificial kinship relation which is taken very literally by the more pious. Therefore, a husband and wife never belong to the same
[582] mahabbar. Among the more pious, a member may not marry the widow of a mahabbar "brother", for this would be "levirate" which is expressly prohibited by the church as a prechristian custom.

575 [428] According to traditional law, the mähaboär inherits any property left by a deceased member who leaves no blood kin (consanguinal) , in preferance to any relatives he might have by marriage (affinal). The mahabbar
[426 476] acts as a mutual aid society for its members, as banker, making loans to members in financial need by raising internal subscriptions, and will even pay for the "tazkar" memorial feast 40 days after a member's death if his
[608] family cannot afford to do it properly. Family and personal problems of all kinds are discussed among "brothers" and "sisters", thus crossing the usual kinship
[584] lines of confidence and trust. Marriage arrangements between extended families having eligible youngsters are often first informally broached by women "sisters", who then agree to ask their husbands to act as intermediaries.

575 561 When children reach the "age of reason" (boys above 7 years of age) they may be accepted into a kind of junior mäbabtär by older boys; girls above 10 years of age into junior sororities of older girls. When a

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575 561 mahabbar is first founded, the usual pattern of an age group is generally followed, so that young-marrieds, middle-aged, and elders have their own. But since there is great prestige in being admitted to a mahabbar of older persons, partly because of the honor of associating with respected elders, partly for direct economic advantages of belonging to an old, well-endowed mahabbar, boundaries of age do not last long. Elders, on their part, desire to replace vacancies left by deceased members with younger persons, whom they can dominate.

575 566 Some persons belong to more than one mahabbar, but generally only the relatively well-to-do freehold landowners and traders can afford the expense. It is possible to transfer to another mahabbar, but it is usually not in a person's interest to sever established relationships; human, economic and legal. In case of any difficulty, he has ready bondsmen to act as "wäs" (guarantors). Most of all, the rare opportunity to express individual preference in a formal "we-group" creates personal, psychological ties that the average Amhara does not like to forego.

One of the most noteworthy and socially significant aspects of the mahabbar association is the wide variety of functions for which it can be adapted, despite--or perhaps because of--its simple structure. This is in almost complete contradistinction to most other Amhara patterns, which usually evidence a complex hierarchical structure and very specifically regulated functions. In comparison, the mahabbar is little structured.

264 procedure, also called "cämmäsä" is in imitation of procedure at the court of nobles, and it is known that kings have always had their special cupbearers ("gänash") who tasted the drink against possible poison, and who also removed any floating debris ("gäffata") such as beeswax from the drink.

574 The hospitality group on non-kin members which meets most
575 regularly, once a month, is the "mähabbär" association, already described. Based originally on religious private communion, each member plays host once a month to drink from "Mary's cup" ("yänaryas sewa"), to feast, for chant and dance ("zäffan") and less formal gossipy entertainment and conversation ("tächäwwäta").

C. Verbal Expression: Formalities; Wit; Pedagogic Riddles.

192 Emotional exclamations in everyday use are highly formalized:

Pain - "häyy häyy" (also if a painful truth "sinks in"; astonishment).

Fear - "woyy" (especially by women, just before a fearful event happens).

Fearful surprise - "oyyi" (e.g. when someone stumbles, or has an accident).

Alarm - "errii" - (cry of alarm; also of great sorrow as in death of kin).

Skeptical surprise - "erra" ("you don't say?!"); Reply: "mut" (abbreviated from "yemut", lit. "May (the emperor die) if this is not true").

Pleasure - "essäy" (to indicate comfort, e.g. when sitting down after having climbed a long, tiring hill).

576 Formal politeness in etiquette always considers the social status
514 of the person addressed. Thus, there are six ways of informing an
192 inquirer that the person he seeks has gone out to defecate or urinate:

Impolite, though not vulgar: "weha afässä" - (lit. he poured water).

Polite: "der wätta" - lit. he went to the bush).

Polite: "äj wätta" - (lit. he went out the door).

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121 side are regarded with reserve and suspicion, if not hostility. For this reason
186 the word of native local authorities has always carried more weight than that
823 of imported or distant authorities. For this reason the names of bars and cafés around Addis Ababa today are to a large extent place names. For this reason
• [575] the type of voluntary association which has aroused the most enthusiastic interest in Addis Ababa in recent years is the association based on a membership drawn from the same *agar*.[50] Regionalist sentiments are so intense in connection with these groups that some members of the Manz association, for example, have asserted that they would not admit to membership a person whose family originated in a district only a few kilometers outside the boundaries of Manz.

121 This type of orientation to Manz, Gondar, and the many other regions in Amhara country may be regarded as an instance of the more general phenomenon referred to above as "primordial sentiments." These are sentiments which are based on the awareness of certain given qualities shared by the members of a group, qualities such as race, language, religious affiliation, tribal affiliation, as well as region of origin. The primordial sentiments account for much of the cohesion and much of the vitality among the members of any traditional society. How these allegiances are affected in the course of modernization has considerable bearing on the future shape of the rapidly developing nations.

A number of factors inherent in modernization work to erode the primordial sentiments. Increased physical and social mobility tend to uproot the individual from the settings of family and home community in which these sentiments are produced and reinforced. Occupational position comes to replace membership in primordial groups as a primary determinant of status and identity. Secondary education, military training, and the development of national institutions and symbols promote the sentiment of nationalism to which these narrower allegiances are subordinated.

Other aspects of modernization, however, work in the opposite direction to intensify primordial sentiments. The education of members of minority groups gives them both a heightened sense of grievance and a voice with which to protest. The creation of new forms of wealth and power provides new bases for competition and conflict, processes which tend to be structured along lines already laid out by cleavages based on primordial differences. The insecurity aroused by the threat to tradition inherent in modernization also produces defensive reactions which often take the form of heightened allegiance to such groups.

This intensification of primordial loyalties during modernization presents a problem which, for all their differences, nearly all the nations of Africa and Asia have in common. Whether the critical differences revolve about language, as in India; religion, as in Lebanon; geography, as in Indonesia; or

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Selassie I theater, and the secondary level art school.* Library facilities included the National Library, with some fifty thousand volumes; the University College Library, with about forty-five; and the reading rooms of the United States Information Service, the British Center, and the Soviet Information Service. The national library also contains a historical museum, and there is a handsome and well appointed archeological museum nearby, neither of which has so far been operated with a view to encouraging public attendance.

Except for occasional lectures sponsored by the national library and the University College extension program, none of the above institutions serves as a center for intellectual communication among adult Ethiopians. It was hoped by some that with the inauguration of the Haile Selassie I University, in December, 1961, a major new center of intellectual life would be created; but the government found it difficult to push ahead with its announced concept of an integrated institution which would operate autonomously and at a high standard.

Outside these institutions, moreover, there have been few channels of communication through which Ethiopian intellectuals can develop their minds and stimulate their imaginations. There are no periodicals to serve as a medium for such communication. One possibility, the *Ethiopian Observer*, is not quite an exception. Limited resources have kept it from operating at as high a level as available talent might permit, and its basically apologetic orientation renders implausible its claims to be "A Journal of Independent Opinion." The daily newspapers which feature contributed articles—the *Ethiopian Herald*, the *Addis Zaman*, and the Amharic sections of the *Voice of Ethiopia*—have tended to exclude pieces that have anything to do with highly controversial matters. Nor are there many social occasions for the serious discussion of intellectual matters. Professional associations, clubs devoted to intellectual matters, and even informal discussion groups exist not at all or else in a very haphazard form.

Contact with the intellectual world outside Ethiopia is almost as meager. Foreign-educated Ethiopians tend to become intellectually demoralized on returning home. The loss of a taste for reading has frequently been one of the first casualties experienced by Western-educated Ethiopians on return from abroad. Only a few hardy souls attempt to maintain some sort of link with the outside world, through subscribing to such magazines as the *New Statesman*, *Paris Soir*, or *New Republic*. For most of them, coming home means a cessation of the most elementary intellectual functions, other

* In 1963 an Institute of Ethiopian Studies was established at Haile Selassie I University, including a substantial Ethiopiana library and museum.

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191 155 rhythm and rhyme of words as an epicure with a palatable viand or intoxicating old wine. . . . Like the infant, his affective state can only be pacified through a rhythmical expression of pleasurable sounds.[8]

The Amharic language itself registers a certain sensibility to the nature of poetry as an oral outlet. Agreeable and pleasing language is characterized in Amharic by the same word which is used to characterize particularly pleasing food: "*tāfata*" ("it is sweet"). The introduction to the *Chronicles* of Emperor [539] Galawdewos is but the literary embellishment of a type of statement which could be made by any Amhara:

> We commence here this beautiful narrative, of more pleasing taste to the mouth . . . than honey and sugar, which will bring pleasure to those who hear it and will give, to those who understand it, a joy like that given by song and wine.[9]

155 828 [826] The incorporation of knowledge no less than the enjoyment of words is conceived in explicitly oral terms in Amharic. The stomach is regarded as the seat of wisdom, and in the language of schoolboys the diligent student is one who has thoroughly "drunk his lesson." The experiencing of one's school as an Alma Mater is probably quite intense; as one tenth-grade student wrote in a contribution to his school newspaper, "Oh! Mother School! There is nothing like school! As a mother feeds her children with milk and bread, so does a school feed her children, the pupils, with education."[10]

155 261 594 527 [575] [794] Eating and drinking for their own sake, beyond what is required for nutrition, form perhaps the most obvious medium for oral erotism, and one that is cultivated to a notable degree among the Amhara. Feasting is called for on every possible occasion—christenings, funerals, and memorial services, as well as engagements, weddings, and annual holidays. The chief purpose of the only voluntary association in traditional Amhara society, the religious fraternal association known as the *māhebar,* is to eat and drink in honor of a certain saint on his day every month. The duration of any large celebration is said to depend on how long the food and drink last; successful ones go on for three days. Linguistic usage stresses the oral function on such occasions. One "eats at," rather than attends, a christening party; one "drinks in," rather than belongs to, a *māhebar;* one expects to "eat at," rather than dance at, somebody's wedding. The very word for Easter, "*Fāsiqā,*" literally means "great feast."

155 261 264 The activity of eating is colored by a number of conventions which express its great emotional significance. The mood at mealtime is supposed to be deeply serious. Food is to be masticated aloud, indicating a total involvement with the task at hand. Not to let others hear one chewing, like eating by oneself, also is taken to imply greed. The usual obligation to stand when somebody enters the room is waived when one is eating. "Grain is king," says an

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*121 794 795 are left free to a large extent. Since every day of the month except the thirtieth is sanctified by dedication to some saint, Mass must be performed virtually every day, a norm which is actually fulfilled by churches which have a numerous clergy. The burden for individual clergymen is kept small by a system of rotation. The average parish church will have services perhaps ten to fifteen times a month, which is still too often for heavy popular attendance. Even on Sundays and the most important holidays, when the laity are expected to attend, their participation is excused by other considerations. Those who have eaten earlier in the day, who have had sexual relations the night before, or who are harboring a grudge in their "stomach" are not even supposed to come to church. If they do come, they sit outside the wall chatting with one another while the Mass is performed inside.

*121 794 795 783 Customs concerning Communion and Confession likewise give the individual a wide range of freedom. Partaking of the Communion is not required of anyone; the experience simply is available to those who are ritually pure (children, and those who have married by the *querbān*), if they are so inclined. Confession is not mandatory, but according to personal inclination. Every man has the right to choose his own personal confessor or "soul-father," though if satisfied with the one of his father, he may retain him. (A woman adopts the confessor of her husband.) The soul-father's advice may be sought when a problem arises. If a man sins—breaks the fast, works on a holiday, commits theft or murder—he is supposed to confess. If he chooses to do so, the soul-father will prescribe a certain penance—fasting an extra amount, sleeping on the floor for a period, giving something to the poor or to the church. But the initiative is entirely up to the sinner and probably more often than not he keeps the offense to himself. The proportion of Amhara who keep every fast strictly, go to church a few times a month, and confess their transgressions to the soul-father is small; in the estimate of one Amhara informant, less than five per cent.

*121 794 575 Still greater permissiveness may be observed in connection with the religious fraternal associations known as the *māhebar*. The *māhebar* consists of a group of people from the same general area, usually of the same sex, who meet once a month on the day devoted to the saint for whom the association is named. The place of meeting rotates among the homes of the members, and the soul-father of the host is always present to bless the occasion. The meetings consist of much eating, drinking, and conviviality. Membership in a *māhebar* is purely voluntary, and the individual who wishes to join one usually has a choice among several in a given area.*

For the Amhara laity, then, a few burdensome ritual and fiscal constraints

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[735] * There is a variant of the *māhebar* known as the *sanbatē*, whose members take turns in providing food for the clergy and poor folk on Sundays.

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are balanced by a fairly permissive mode of organization. For the clergy, the constraints are heavier; the fasting requirements are increased, and the priesthood involves, as we have seen, strict marital fidelity. On the other hand, the individualistic organization of the clergy is most striking.

This individualism is conspicuous already in the church schools, which are organized not on a class basis but in a series of master-pupil relations. Students begin their courses of study whenever they arrive at the residence of the master, and proceed each at his own pace. The master spends the bulk of his time with more advanced students, who in turn are used to instruct the less advanced. The pupils are very much on their own, uncontrolled either by their families, with whom they no longer reside, nor by any formal institution. The same is true of the masters, who are not subjected to any sort of outside controls. Indeed, each teacher tends to develop his own unique method of teaching, regarding as something of a personal monopoly.[24]

The ministrating clergy are likewise free from controls emanating from a broad ecclesiastical organization. Each parish church functions autonomously under the direction of a head (*alaqā*) chosen by the local clergy. (Heads of the most important churches have traditionally been appointed by the emperor.) The obligations of the priesthood are not very great. The chief duty of the priest is to take his turn in performing the Mass. His pastoral services are limited to occasional visits with his particular confessants, from whom he expects to receive regular rewards of food and drink. Otherwise, his life is much the same as that of his lay neighbors.

The role of the *dabtarā*, as we have seen, is still more flexible. *Dabtarā* who are associated with a parish church are expected to take their turns singing hymns and composing *qenē* in the outer ring of the church; but otherwise they exist as free entrepreneurs, and they need not be so attached unless they so desire.

The individualistic organization of the Ethiopian Church is most striking, perhaps, in the case of the monks, especially when compared with Christian monastic orders in the Western world. Ethiopian monks are bound by nothing other than the original conditions for assuming the role, namely, renouncing family ties and worldly possessions. The monk need not enter a monastery; he may continue to live in his old home or may take to the woods as a hermit. If he does go to live at a monastery, his life is not radically changed. The Ethiopian monastery is not an organized community, but a sacred place—the site of a large and important church, in the vicinity of which live numbers of individual monks. The monk comes and goes as he wishes, prays whenever he wants, and may live free of any obligations toward his fellow monastics and toward the rest of the society.*

* There are, however, some monasteries where a more organized and disciplined regime may be found.

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omy during the past two decades, represents a significant growth of the capacity for voluntary formal organization in the modernizing sector.[41]

Māhebar (*Regional Associations*).—A type of formal association which has sprung up in Addis Ababa in recent years, becoming popular for the first time around 1960, is known as the *māhebar*. While its name is taken from the traditional Orthodox fraternal association, in aims and organization it is different from the religious *māhebar*. While the latter is devoted to honoring one of the saints and is convened primarily for feasting and sociability, the modern *māhebar* is organized on the basis of territorial or tribal bonds and is concerned with problems of social betterment. The first *māhebar* of this kind was established by the Gurage in the fifties.* Thereafter, the idea spread to members of other groups, and Addis Ababa residents originating in Gondar, Tigre, Harar, Manz, Tagulat, Fitche and elsewhere began to form *māhebar* of their own. The basic idea behind all these *māhebar* is to make some contribution to the welfare of the provinces through projects voluntarily financed and organized by fellow-countrymen living in the metropolis. These projects have included construction of roads, schools, and hospitals; supplying books for schools; and provision of facilities for assisting inhabitants of the provinces who come to the city. Members of the various *māhebar* convene weekly or biweekly, usually on Sunday in the vicinity of one or another of the Addis Ababa churches, to discuss their projects and make their financial contributions.

Formal Associations of Foreign Inspiration

Student Associations.—The Orthodox Students Association was founded in 1958 by a convention representing all the colleges and some of the secondary schools. Its successful establishment was due in large part to the efforts of an Indian Orthodox minister who at the time was one of the Emperor's private secretaries. There is some evidence that an earlier spontaneous effort to form such a group in the early fifties was checked by the government. Members of this association have been concerned with adapting the activities of the church to contemporary needs. They criticize the established church for its use of a dead language, excessive ritualism, and lack of teaching; and have proposed that the Orthodox Church should institute Sunday schools and

* The Gurage *māhebar* remains in a class of its own, with respect to size, wealth, and ambitiousness of program. The Gurage have also pointed the way to using the *māhebar* form in a way that transcends the narrow tribal or territorial passions which it has thus far tended to canalize. This has been done through the establishment of another, project-oriented *māhebar* concerned solely with building a road from Alam Gana to Wollamo Soddo, whose membership includes Galla and Wollamo as well as Gurage. This association has already collected well over a million dollars, and has completed the construction of a bridge. It is headed by a capable Gurage army general and its activities and collections are reported regularly in the Addis Ababa press.

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cultivate a missionary spirit in order to reach the non-Christian peoples of Ethiopia. The association sponsors weekly religious services, featuring hymns in Amharic and talks in Amharic on religious and moral questions, and publishes a monthly journal. The Orthodox Students Association stands out as the first nationwide voluntary association in Ethiopia. It holds an annual convention which draws some three hundred students from all parts of the country.

The Ethiopian College Students Association was established in 1960 after some years of patient maneuvering by officers of the various college student governments. It attempts to represent the interests and needs of students vis-à-vis the government and to handle relations with international student organizations.

A number of student clubs have appeared from time to time within the framework of the colleges. One of the most popular and productive of these has been the Ethnological Society of the University College, founded in the early fifties by a Polish member of the college staff. Over the years it has produced several issues of an ethnological bulletin. More recently, under the framework of the new university, dramatic and choral groups have been established as well as groups like the Education Students Association and the Economics Students Association. Graduates of some of the secondary schools and colleges, moreover, have formed a small number of alumni associations.

Labor Unions.—Although Ethiopia has for some time been a paying member of the ILO, the government has until recently strongly opposed the establishment of unions in the country. Nevertheless, due to the encouragement of labor representatives from Western and other African countries, as well as to the courageous efforts of a number of Ethiopians, several unions have at last been established and have won some degree of recognition from the government.* Trade unions were first attempted among employees of the Franco-Ethiopian Railroad and in Eritrea.[42] They now include employees of a number of factories. Even household servants have formed associations that establish minimal conditions which members are obliged to demand from their employers.

Professional Associations.—The Ethiopian Teachers Association, with a large paper membership but scarcely any activity, was the only professional association in Ethiopia prior to the 1960 rebellion. If one may generalize from the frustrated attempts of Ethiopian doctors to establish a medical association, it would seem that the government was attempting to discourage groups of this sort as well as trade unions. Since 1961, however, the picture has changed. There now exists not only a medical association, which publishes its own

* A law establishing a legal basis for labor unions was enacted by the Ethiopian parliament in 1962.

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journal, but also an engineers' association, a college teachers' association, and an Ethiopian writers' association. Earlier attempts to establish an organization of lawyers have not yet reached fruition.

National and International Service Organizations.—A final group of formal associations consists of those which include non-Ethiopian nationals as well as Ethiopians in their membership and which carry out welfare services of various sorts. The Ethiopian Red Cross, the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association, the YMCA, and the Rotary Club of Addis Ababa have been active for more than a decade. More recently, the International Christian Fellowship was formed with an eye to discussing ways of translating Christian principles into social action, and the Social Service Society has broken new ground in the welfare field with its ambitious program of relocating and rehabilitating Addis Ababa indigents.

Informal Associations

Another significant sociological development since the 1960 rebellion has been the blossoming of what might be called "mutual confidence groups." Although the public climate remains somewhat tense and generalized suspicion still prevails, a step has been taken away from the complete atomism of the pre-rebellion era. These groups consist of numbers of friends, bound by such factors as kinship, common ethnic background, relationships formed during study abroad, and occupational ties. Perhaps the most important single bond underlying these groups derives from friendships formed during the crucial experience of attending secondary school together. While for the most part these groups carry out no organized activities or structured discussions, they do provide a context in which any of the issues of the day can be discussed with fairly complete frankness and without fear of reprisal.

There are some progressive Ethiopians who would like to see these groups become the nuclei of action groups and political parties, even on an overt basis. The prevailing view among them, however, seems to be that this is as far as they can go under the present regime.

The efflorescence of voluntary associations in Ethiopia during the past half dozen years constitutes a remarkable thickening of the fabric of Ethiopian society. It may be seen as a vast, unconscious process of arousing and co-ordinating energies to meet the novel realities of Ethiopia's current historical situation. What relationship to this collective process have the individualistic features of Amhara character and society which were discussed above?

It may be observed that in virtually none of the cases cited above were the Amhara the initiators of the associational forms in question. The territorial and "project" *māhebar* were introduced into Ethiopian life by the Gurage; so, as far as present evidence indicates, were the *eddīr* and the *equb*. The labor

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The labor movement, limited as it is, has been in the hands of Eritreans on the one hand, and primarily non-Amhara workers in the south. Student associations have been formed chiefly at the instigation and under the aegis of foreign staff members; though here, as with the professional associations, modernized Amhara have sometimes played a leading role.

Once the new associations had been introduced, the Amhara like other Ethiopians were quick to adopt and expand them. Their participation in these new associations, however, has been affected, as might be expected, by the intrusion of traditional behavior patterns. Three examples of such behavior patterns come readily to mind.

(1) While the *equb* is conceived as a kind of credit union and as a focus for communal sociability, the *co-operative* sentiment tends to be lacking among members of Amhara *equb*, at least those of which the author has any knowledge. For example, in case of dire need, an *equb* member who desires the lump sum out of turn may be forced to *buy* the amount from the weekly winner, sometimes by forfeiting as much as ten or twenty per cent of the amount. By capitalizing on the crises of others, some enterprising *equb* members are able to sell their successful claims several times. Furthermore, in the early years of their existence, *equb* were frequently faced with the problem created by members who won the money early in the cycle, left town with the money, and did not return to pay their later installments. This difficulty has been met to some extent by the requirement of securing one or two guarantors for each person who enters an *equb*, but problems of this nature have led to altercations that have brought many *equb* members into court.

(2) The behavior of members of Amhara territorial *māhebar* is essentially that of a traditional social or civil gathering. The big men are seated in places of honor; the rest of the people stand quietly by. After a protracted period of exchanging greetings and milling about, the crowd listens respectfully while one or more of the big men makes a statement, and perhaps exchanges a few words with the group's secretary; and then the gathering disbands. Although the *māhebar* is organized with respect to the attainment of specific goals, the substance of the meetings is instumental to a very slight degree. The assembly rarely involves a meeting of minds to discuss an issue or a common problem, or to work out a program of action; but exists primarily as an occasion for the resonance of primordial sentiments by virtue of shared territorial attachments.

(3) In all associations, finally, certain traditional characteristics which are incongruent with the optimum conduct of groups come to the fore. This is no less true of the modern-educated than of the traditionals. Members fail to come on time to arranged meetings or neglect to come altogether.* They

* The *equb* has attempted to check this pattern by imposing fines on members who come late.